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CRP and ACR - Management Ideas that Save Money and Help Wildlife

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Hoosier Farmland Wildlife Notes

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HOOSIER FARMLAND WILDLIFE NOTES

Fostering Wildlife in Agriculture

Vol. 1 No. 3

CRP AND ACR: Management Ideas that Save Money and Help Wildlife

- **Mowing of CRP and ACR land may not be required.**

Indiana State law requires the control of four NOXIOUS weeds (Canada thistle, Shattercane, Johnsongrass, and Bur cucumber).

- **Each acre not mowed will save you about ten dollars.**
- **Water is an acceptable cover on CRP and ACR acres.**
- **Converting CRP land to trees can extend your CRP contract five years.**

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service • West Lafayette, Indiana



"Hoosier Farmland Wildlife Notes" is a joint effort of ASCS, IDNR Div. of Fish and Wildlife, Purdue University Dept. of Forestry & Natural Resources, SCS, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Steering Committee: Ron Birt, Jeff Kiefer, Jim McCall, Pete Meyer, Bob Montgomery, and Jim Ruwaldt. Prepared by: Brian K. Miller, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Purdue University.

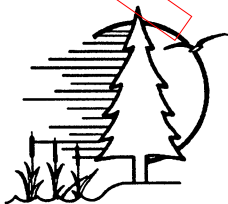
CRP Management

Mowing is probably not a requirement of either the CRP or ACR program in your county. You can save up to ten dollars per acre by not mowing and greatly improve your CRP/ACR acres for wildlife. State law requires the control of four NOXIOUS weeds (Canada Thistle, Shattercane, Johnsongrass, and Bur cucumber) in Indiana. Use spot treatment with herbicides or spot mowing to control noxious weeds in isolated or small areas. This will save you time and money.

CRP fields in the midwest have been documented to contain more than 26 bird species and 132 times as many bird nests as the same area in row crop production. Indiana now has nearly 500,000 acres of CRP land capable of providing valuable wildlife nesting and winter cover. Pheasants, quail, waterfowl, and other ground nesting birds require secure nesting and winter cover. Unmowed CRP and ACR fields offer residual vegetation of sufficient height and density to attract nesting hens and have been proven to contain three to five times more nests and successful hatches than mowed fields.

If mowing is necessary to control woody encroachment or set back succession, mow no more than once per year and delay mowing until after nesting of most wildlife species is complete (August 15). Mow only one third of the CRP acreage each year. This reduces the mowing required in any one year and provides three different age classes of grass for wildlife. Use food plots as an intermediate step in re-establishing cover on problem spots or to convert fescue to more productive cool season or warm season grasses.

There are also other practices, such as planting warm season grasses, tree planting or wetland restoration, which reduce maintenance costs and improve wildlife habitat on CRP and ACR acres.



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ACR Management

ACR acres established to permanent cover can be planted in patches less than five acres or in strips wider than 33 feet. These patches can be located where erosion control is most necessary or where farming is most difficult. When planted in warm season grasses, burning every three to five years is all that is necessary for maintenance. In addition, some Quail Unlimited and Pheasants Forever chapters may assist you with establishment.

If ACR acres are hayed after August 31, it is best to leave as much unmowed cover as possible in field corners, woods edges, field borders, along streams or ditches, or next to fence rows. This provides valuable winter cover and nesting habitat for birds that nest early in spring before regrowth occurs. Winter cover and habitat quality are improved when these unmowed areas are adjacent to permanent woody or brushy habitat.

Wetland Restoration

You may restore any previously drained wetlands on your CRP acreage. (These are wet areas drained by tile or ditches). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will do this at no cost to you. Restored wetlands require little maintenance, greatly enhance wildlife habitat, can solve management problems created by traditionally wet areas, and increase the aesthetic value and beauty of the property. If interested, contact the USFWS at 812/334-4261. You will be under no obligation to keep the restored wetland after your CRP contract expires.

Tree Planting

If you are enrolled in the CRP before the 10th sign-up (before November 28, 1990), you may extend your contract by five years by planting trees. Fifty percent cost-share money may be available. See your county ASCS office for details.

Some variations and additional restrictions may apply in a few counties. Check with your county ASCS office.

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